

# CREEKWOOD

JANUARY 2024



## Creekwood UMC

Narrative Budget  
2024







# Narrative Budget 2024

## **"What do we absolutely need to be a church?"**

This is a question we ask our Confirmation class each year as they explore their own faithful commitment to participate in the ministry of Jesus Christ through Creekwood UMC UMC. It is also a question we had to ask ourselves over the last 3 years as Creekwood UMC UMC linked arms with churches all over the nation in navigating a pandemic and rising political tensions. In evaluating staff, mission, outreach, programing, and facility needs, we had to ask ourselves: "Can we live without \_\_\_\_\_?" or "Will we be able to \_\_\_\_\_?"

I have been inspired by the way Creekwood UMC has not merely survived this period, we have thrived!

In 2023, we have:

- Added over 60 new members.
- Welcomed dozens of new visitors to Welcome Lunches.
- Increased Student Ministry weekly engagement by 186% that of two years ago.
- Established new practices of care for those grieving inside and outside of the church.
- Grown weekly Adult Ministry engagement by over 35%, including a new Young Adult small group.
- Had more people submit a pledge card than any previous year.

The Leadership Board would like you to consider 2024 to be a time of growth, corporately and personally. If we have previously asked "What can we live without?", then it's time to ask,

## **"What will make us come more fully alive?"**

Let's start envisioning and aspiring for larger dreams once more.

As you peruse the diverse ways your giving empowers each ministry of Creekwood UMC UMC to glorify God, I encourage you to consider stretching your giving beyond your usual comfort level. Not only will this aid our collective work for Christ, but I believe you will find a deeper joy as you trust God further.



Here is a diagram of what it takes to do ministry in our context:

Fortunately, the grace of God is free. However, communicating and sharing it in the most effective way to reach people in our area is not. The majority of our current giving goes to our wonderful staff and our beautiful facilities.

When you consider your pledge for 2024, do not start with "What can we live without?"

Start with the question, **"What will make us come more alive?"**

Peace,

David Lessner

## MISSIONS

Samaritan Inn offers apartments to residents after satisfying stringent requirements



The Samaritan Inn, administers programs to help people get back on their feet to support themselves and or their families. They administer training programs to help them find a job and community assistance in order to stabilize their life. After successfully satisfying multiple requirements, the Samaritan Inn offers the resident an apartment to rent to live and support themselves up to 18 months.

The Samaritan Inn then looks for adopters to furnish the apartment for the resident. All items donated become the property of the resident once they move in.

In May 2023, the Celebration Class accepted the challenge of furnishing an apartment for someone we had never met. We had several considerations.

Where were we going to get all furnishings needed to outfit an apartment with a limited budget? How would we store the items? Who would pick the items up? Who would transport the items to the apartment? We are not a young class!!

However, GOD provided.

Word got out about our project and day by day we started receiving donations. A bedroom set, a sofa, a recliner, a rocker, a kitchen table. Class members banded together and picked up each large item and brought it to the old church office to store.

Over the next four months, class members donated food, area rugs, kitchen utensils, bath towels, a bed spread, dinnerware, cups, glassware, lamps, pillows, 2 TVs, a TV cabinet, pictures, blender, toaster, luggage, vacuum cleaner.



**Sam Takes Up Residence**

Finally, we had what we needed and moved all donations to the apartment on 9/22/23. Class members then proceeded to decorate and put the final touches on the apartment. Others members purchased last minute food items from the gift cards donated by the class.

Sam, our resident took possession of his apartment on 10/7/23. What a celebration all of us had. This was the first time he was able to see his apartment. His reaction was priceless and all of us had a "GOD moment". Those in attendance will never forget.

Sam is such a deserving person and was so appreciative and without a doubt will carry these gifts forward in his life. The Celebration Class is now apart of his extended family and Sam is forever apart of our family.

A "Big Thank You" to all the Celebration class members for making this project happen. It's been challenging but also very, very rewarding as well.

Thank you so much for your giving hearts.



**Samaritan Inn  
Apartment Dedication**





# Baptisms at Creekwood



# Celebration & Worship

**“A**scribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor.”  
(Psalm 29:1-2 NRSV)

In 2024, Creekwood UMC plans to invest \$202,106 into the staff and resources that help us celebrate the love of God, the salvation of Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is a decrease of \$45,513.88 from our 2023 budget plans, in a continued effort to live within the current giving patterns of our congregation. Most of this reduction is due to staff changes we already made over 2022-2023, some of whom had a role in worship on a regular basis.

How does your financial giving turn into the celebration and worship of God?

- The congregation singing just a little louder to support an ambitious group of teenagers



on our Student Worship Team learning how to lead us in worship, under the musical tutelage of staff member Cameron Herren.

- An anthem sung by our choir that gives us just the right amount of nostalgic peace and spirit-filled inspiration, organized and directed by the incomparable Mike Crawford, and played by the inspiring hands of staff member Phyllis Carlin.
- A child who comes to worship with their parents is given one of the “Children’s Worship Binders,” prepared by staff member Caitlin Maxwell and her team, just for little ones like him, so that all people, no matter what age, can be a part of worshipping God.
- The Contemporary Worship Band leading us when we passionately sing out our beliefs in song.
- Lynn Partain, Schelly Storm, Chuck Bottner, and the rest of the greeters offering radical hospitality as they direct a new person over to grab a donut and some coffee.
- A sermon from pastors David Lessner or Keri Lynn Lucas that makes someone say, “I think they were preaching just for me today.”
- The AV Squad, led by staff member Patrick O’Connor,

broadcasts our worship out to the entire community.

Worship stands as the cornerstone of our weekly routine and represents an integral part of our identity as Christians. It is our weekly reminder of God’s love for us, the forgiveness of sins offered through Christ, and the calling of the Holy Spirit for each one of us. Worship is how we celebrate the most special moments of the year, such as Christmas Eve, Confirmation, Palm Sunday Parade, Easter, and last year’s “Soups and Sweets” on Stewardship Sunday. Which means that alongside your financial generosity that makes worship happen, it also takes your presence and passion. As you consider your financial tithe, consider also increasing your worship attendance to fully celebrate all God has done for us.





# Care Ministries

## Showing Love in times of loss

Here at Creekwood, in being a hospitable church, we have looked at what that would mean for the Care Ministry team. The first thing we looked at was the Memorial Service/Celebrations of Life.

The first distinguished aspect was that it is not just a one-day event. It's a journey which, depending on the circumstances, can begin months or years before the death of the person. The Care team and pastors, provide care and resources to help the families through this journey.

It can also mean sitting down with the person and planning out what their Celebration of Life will look like, and what are their wishes. We provide a guide to walk them through this process. Our aim is to make this as easy on the family as possible, and to provide them with as much support as they need.

So, we have a step-by-step guide for planning a service. Whether it be preplanning, or if a sudden death, and then a plan for immediate or near future arrangements. Wendy and David are available for the families to go through the guide and walk them through it. No family is ever left on their own means to figure it out.

Once the service is done. We discovered many families were asking the questions "Now what do I have to do?" So, we have made a check list for families of things that need to be done once a family member has passed. The journey continues as David and I continue to follow the family to check on them. We provide resources and materials that help them through the grieving process.

George Lark, a member of our congregation who recently loss his wife told us, "I do not know what I would have done without your resources and guiding hand through this journey with Judy. You were all a Godsend!"



**Rev. Wendy McConney**  
**Director of Care Ministries**

# Spiritual Formation for Young People

*"People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.'"*  
(Luke 18:15-16 NRSV)

*"Sunday School is the best, best, best, EVER! And so are the teachers and learning about Jesus and God and the Bible. I LOVE SUNDAY SCHOOL!" - Monroe Fendley, 4th grade*

*"Ever since I started coming to Creekwood UMC about a year ago, Sunday school and Wednesday night youth group have been the best parts of my week." - Dana Colston, Junior*

The Bible is full of powerful images of young people. Isaiah 11 paints the picture of God's peaceful world, which we are led to by a child. Jesus declares in Mark 10 that no one will realize the kingdom of heaven unless they become like a child. And, of course, Jesus comes to this world as a child so that we might know that God is with us in every stage of life, from beginning to end. It is no wonder, then, that Jesus wants the children to come to him. If the next generation is going to help mirror more of heaven here on earth, then we must make every effort to support their spiritual growth, nourishment, and empowerment.

Creekwood UMC will allocate \$171,213 towards staffing, supplies, programs, and experiences dedicated to one of our most crucial areas of ministry—family ministry. This represents an increase of \$25,000 over our budgeted amount for 2023, which largely reflects budgeting for the Director of Student Ministry position to be filled full-time when fiscally responsible to do so. Ministry to those age birth to 18 is essential in our area, that consistently attracts families with children who are looking for an environment of excellence and support. The dedicated efforts of our Family Ministry Team focus on creating exceptional programs where children and adolescents engage with biblical teachings, enjoy their time at church, and build a sense of community among themselves. What we can offer them excellently is a grounding of their identity and worth in the God who

loves them and has a purpose for their life.

How does our financial giving turn into spiritual formation for young people?

- 3rd graders like Kylee Rose, Austin Robertson, and Andy Potts who received their very own 3rd Grade Bible from Bibleman and Biblewoman. Creekwood UMC invests in the biblical literacy of our Kids and Students by giving them an age-appropriate Bible at different parts of their development to keep their interest and enthusiasm for God's wisdom.
- Under the guidance of the remarkable volunteer Jen Waldrop, our Student Adult Leadership Team (SALT) starts every meeting with a "leadership learning moment". During this time, students delve into new leadership principles, contemplating their applicability not only within the church but also in their academic pursuits and extracurricular engagements. In the summer, students in grades 6-12 and their adult sponsors journey out on a mission trip that not only does good work for those they are helping but is a worldview-shaping experience for our students as they gain a more in-depth view of what God can use them for.
- Each week, students gather around a provided meal on Wednesday nights as part of a fun night of games, small groups, prayers, and lesson crafted by Keri Lynn Lucas. As much as food is essential to teenagers for many reasons, there is a connection we make around a meal that develops bonds of trust and peace. The meals we provide have helped our students make forever friends.





- In the nursery, one of our Pre-K teachers and SALT members, Ava Loter, not only cares for the kids and teaches the curriculum provided by Caitlin Maxwell, but she has taken it upon herself to play guitar and sing songs with them. The peace that our littlest kids feel will build up their trust in the God we teach them about during their most formative years.
- Hot chocolate is not the only reason that our 3-5th class has grown, but it's certainly a draw. This class is going through a curriculum that takes them through the entire Bible in less than one year.  
exclusively theirs is just one example of how we made Sunday school engaging so that kids want to come and learn the transformational stories of the Bible.



Family Ministries is one of our top priorities at Creekwood UMC, because of how important children and teenagers are to Jesus, in the Bible, and to our community. They are blessings that promise a future with hope, if we nurture them in the way of love, grace, and a disciplined life of faith.

I hope you will not only give generously to support our Kids and Students, but I hope you will lend your wisdom and presence so that our they know that God loves them and there is nothing they can do about it!





# CREEKWOOD YOUNG ADULTS

Where do you go when you're out of school, have started a career but still feel like you're figuring out how to be an "adult?"

The Creekwood Young Adult Group started because this question was getting asked more and more in the hallways of our church and in the community at large. Young adults (married or not, with or without kids) in our community were looking for a supportive group during a period of life full of transitions.

On August 6, with a handful of RSVP's, Pastor David launched a new group with the hopes that people in this life stage could make friends and help each other navigate all that life brings, keeping Christ in mind. 15 people came. Then 17. In total, we've seen about 21 faces in and out and overwhelmingly it has been a fun journey of exploring purpose, giftedness, and sometimes just reminiscing on the ridiculousness of life.

The group meets in Room 109 at 9:45 am and is always welcome to those who feel "young adult-ish!"



# Serving & Missions

***"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."***

***(Matthew 25:40 NRSV)***

***"So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."***

***(James 2:17 NRSV)***

The outcome of a transformed life in Jesus Christ is supposed to be a life of service. Whether it is Paul's encouragement for the Corinthian church to give generously to the Christians in poverty in Jerusalem or the example of faith set by the "Good Samaritan" story, a life transformed by belief in Christ always leads to the service of others.



Creekwood plans to invest \$135,392 in our serving and missions ministries in 2024. This is an increase of \$9,665 and largely reflects that we have decided to roll our missions budget into our operational budget, in order to prioritize our missions as part of our core ministry of generosity and aim to reduce the number of separate financial "asks" that we make during the year. The Core Missions of Open Door, Samaritan Inn, Harper Elementary, and our outreach to other organizations that empower those with special needs will all be included in our operational budget, with special seasonal opportunities to partner with ACO and other partners.

**Our financial investment in service and missions plays out in these ways:**

- When Kyle, David, or Megan come to Open Door they are greeted by around 40 volunteers dedicated

to giving our friends with special needs a great night of fun, food, and fellowship, while their parents get a little bit of a respite and soul care.

- When Lynn Partain and her team show up Fridays with a snack cart for teachers at Harper Elementary who receive a little bit of a blessing through chocolate to get them through the end of the week.
- When a child at Harper is working so hard on their reading, and is gifted a voucher for one free book at the Book Fair, courtesy of Creekwood UMC.
- When the hard-working residents of the Samaritan Inn, who are seeking to work out of poverty, are greeted in the evening by the Celebration Class or others who have shown up to serve a warm meal that means so much more than a full stomach.



- When the community of Creekwood comes together during a "Give Back" day to honor God through the honoring of the property God gave us, and when we in turn serve our community through radical hospitality each week or during events like Live Nativity.

One element of our mission giving that is often not understood are called "apportionments." Apportionments are our financial commitment to the larger, global work of the United Methodist Church and can be seen through the work of planting new churches, camps and retreat ministries, supporting missionaries around the world, and even providing scholarships for seminary students. It's an act of collective trust and generosity that not only empowers drastically lower malaria fatalities in sub-Saharan Africa but teaches us about the way we should be united in service if we believe in the world The Bible tells us about.

While I hope that financial generosity is a key way that you intentionally lean into God's preferred vision of the world, I also hope you'll take the time this year to practice serving. With so many messages about what we "deserve" or how to "please ourselves," it's important to follow the example of Christ and serve others first.



# Evangelism

***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”  
(Matthew 28:19 NRSV)***

**A**t Creekwood UMC, we know the best evangelism is your commitment to invite your friends to church ministries and share with them why this place is valuable to you and how it has changed your life. However, we do plan to spend \$80,988 on communication tools and staff that will share the Gospel in our community and beyond. This is down from \$43,076 from the 2023 budget, and largely reflects a reduction in staff and non-digital advertising.

The financial investment in evangelism looks like:



- Social media ads and sponsored posts that reach thousands and drive people to follow our media that proclaims good news for the world.
- The technology and equipment needed to live-stream our worship services to those as far away as Colorado Springs who actively give and worship with us each week, or to those who are more home bound but can still be a part of the celebration of God's love with us digitally.
- A Creekwood UMC t-shirt, welcome packet of information, or free gift that gives us a chance to proudly show our devotion to Christ or give someone else the information to do the same.

*I do hope that you always considering who might be the next person to join in on the movement of Christ, and that you'll heed the call of Christ to courageously share your own story of faith.*

*However, we'll continue to do our best to give you easy “on-ramps” such as Trunk or Treat, Easter Egg Hunts, Live Nativity, and other events so that your invitation seems a little less daunting. This year, aim to invite 5 new people to church with you!*





# Missions & Volunteer Participation



ACO Thanksgiving Food Collection



Feed My Starving Children



Student Mission Trip



Samaritan Inn Apartment Dedication



Slidell Mission Trip

# Live Nativity



The Live Nativity has been happening at Creekwood UMC for 19 years for the community.

It is a treasured ministry for us and each year there are positive reviews about it. Some volunteers for this ministry have been doing it for years while others are doing it for the very first time.

Most years, we've held the Live Nativity inside the barn. However, there were a couple of years recently where we held it outside in front of the barn. Weather has a big part in that decision.

So, what is your favorite part of Live Nativity besides the Live Nativity itself? Is it the s'more's, the cookies, the hayride, or the crafts?

Or is it more about the fellowship? Bringing the community around us together with such great effort to tell the timeless testimony of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***

***~ John 3:16***

***~ John 3:16***



# Building Community

***"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one."***

- A Dinner Group that has met three times and exclaimed to each other, "it's almost like we were meant to be together, how did we not know each other before?"
- One of our members bound to their home for health reasons, receiving a visit as part of a "Share the Love" event and making a new friend who continues to visit them.
- A prayer request that is answered by Wendy McConney, and turns into an invitation to find support as part of a Grief Group.
- The Celebration Class was inspired to do more outreach with our Student Ministry, and hosted an afternoon of lunch and yard games—seeing the "bookends" of our congregation connecting with one another was truly seeing heaven on earth.

*This coming year, we will spend \$64,857 on staff and programs aimed at building community. That is a*

*reduction of \$17,416 from the 2023 budget, which largely reflects changes to our staff structure.*

*Enhanced financial capacity would propel us forward in numerous ministry areas, yet in this specific realm, fewer financial limitations would enable us to expand our visions for offering care, fostering relationships, and welcoming our community into deeper connections with us and with God.*



# Property & Administration



***"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28 NRSV)***

*It is generally said, "the church is not a building, the church is the people." Nevertheless, the Bible offers numerous instances highlighting the significance of a designated space for people to assemble as the church.*

*When the Israelites fled slavery and departed from Egypt, they roamed the wilderness for 40 years, yet they still had a designated tent for worship. Under King David's reign, after settling in the Promised Land, they erected a temple.*

*Additionally, Jesus devoted time to prayer and teaching in pivotal gathering spaces, not limited to temples but also in various households.*

*Our building and property serve as an anchor point to remember and be inspired by what God has promised, when our lives are often transitory and chaotic. Our staff that maintains the functionality of our property and administration of our ministries do not*

*always get the credit, but anyone who has ever prayed in the Prayer Garden, played on the playground, sat in a Sunday school room, or sang along to the praise band has experienced the hard work of property and administrative maintenance.*

*This year we will spend \$615,467 on our property, administration, and maintenance costs. This reflects an increase of \$144,437 over last year's budget.*

*The increase is largely due to increased costs of materials and utilities, a changing interest rate on our debt note, and a desire to forecast and save up for maintenance needs instead of tackling repairs retroactively.*

*An important note, is that we are actively selling around 10-11 acres of land on the west side of our property, that is currently unused, in order to get as close as possible to paying off all of Creekwood UMC's existing debt. This would be a monthly savings of around \$18,000.*

***Our investment in our property pays off when:***

- *A new person is asked what brought them to Creekwood UMC, and they answer, "We drove by the property and it is so beautiful."*
- *We are able to serenely celebrate the birth of Jesus in a barn-type setting for Live Nativity and our Christmas Eve barn service*
- *Information is passed out to potential members at a Welcome Lunch, because we have the paper to make copies and the computers to design captivating flyers*
- *A small group meets on a Tuesday in December comfortably because we have heat and proper insulation*
- *The Open Door community can fish around the pond thanks to superb lawncare maintenance*

*As we seek to maintain and improve what God has gifted us with for ministry, we also are working to reduce our debt through selling land and entering into partnership with a local soccer club. As more financial giving would help us dream towards the future of what our property looks like, our Leadership Board is taking the necessary steps to practice good stewardship of what we can properly maintain.*





Creekwood Students participated in Pajama Sunday in December.

# STUDENTS

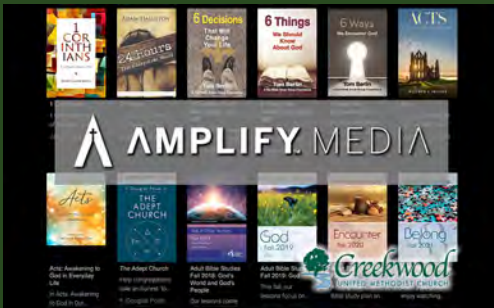
During Sunday School sessions, our children regularly recite the Lord's Prayer. Grady Simpson pleasantly surprised his mother during worship when, during the collective recitation, he demonstrated his ability to recite the entire prayer from memory!





# Adult Spiritual Formation

*"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect."*  
(Romans 12:1-2 NRSV)



**I**n my time at Creekwood UMC I have been active in two small groups. As a participant in the groups my Biblical knowledge has grown along with challenging me on several of my beliefs. The most important benefit has been the "relationship building" that has taken place between me, Jesus and the other members of the groups." - Brandon Pitts

Numerous paths exist for fostering community and nurturing relationships, alongside the numerous opportunities for service and volunteering. However, the church uniquely communicates the life-saving, life-transforming grace of Jesus Christ. This relationship invites us into realms of hope and holiness, grace and gratitude, as well as faith and fearlessness.

Creekwood UMC, as a community, will invest \$68,770 in opportunities, curriculum, staff, and experiences to guide adults into deeper relationships with Christ and each other. This is a reduction of \$11,686 from last year.

What does investment in Adult Ministries look like?

- The steady stream of good news offered through Amplify Media or the curriculum library that Alice Oates and Jill Pendergast have organized by the church office.
- Opportunities like Pub Theology in the summertime, or seasonal Dinner Groups organized by pastor David Lessner.
- Through our e-mail distribution software that delivers encouragement and hope through weekly "Deep Thoughts" and Advent/Lent daily devotionals.
- The newly formed young adult small group that is giving consistent and life-giving community to those in the most transitional life phase.

Creekwood UMC currently hosts 12 small groups that offer opportunities for adults to deepen their relationship with Christ and each other, along with seasonal opportunities such as the aforementioned "Pub Theology" and "Dinner Groups." Your financial gift will empower these groups to offer transformational learning and meaningful relationships. Along with your financial gift, if you are not already a part of a small group or Bible study, let 2024 be the year to join one!



**Creekwood  
Young  
Adults**

# Youth Praise Team



**Top:** Ben Winder, Chase Reagan, Bryson Gallimore, Anna Frost, Cameron HerrREN

**Middle:** Kaitlyn Compton, Will Waldrop, Ava Loter

**Bottom:** Cayna Craver, Cora Craver, Chyler Lessner

We are so blessed to have a talented group of students willing to step up and share their skills.

This group occasionally leads us in worship during the Contemporary Worship hour.

They are led by Cameron Herren of Herren Studios.





Creekwood Bells bring an ancient tradition to worship.  
Contact Phyllis Carlin if you're interested in becoming a part of this ministry.

# Testimonial

## Nancy Meddling on Online Worship

Twenty years ago I moved from Atlanta, Georgia to be near my daughter. I searched for a church and soon found Creekwood. This church became very important to me and I began to be involved and volunteered in many areas. After living at Heritage Ranch for eighteen years, I decided to move to a senior apartment. After this move the thing I miss most is Creekwood!! It is often difficult for me to make it to Creekwood by 8:30. There is a church in the building where I live but it is not the same.

Therefore I listen to Creekwood on line and many Sundays I go to the church here as well. You can't get too much church!



Creekwood is a community where I can find support, feel a sense of belonging, and build a support network that I can rely on. I can find answers there. Maybe if I'm struggling with a specific question or need some direction in my life. Maybe I just need to feel God's love and know that He is there.

As I listen to sermons and study God's teachings, I will have opportunities to receive insight from God. He wants to communicate with me, and church is my good place to hear His voice in my heart and mind.

So, each Sunday, I listen....often on line!

~ Nancy Meddling

## Staff

***"In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel."***  
**-1 Corinthians 9:14**

***"Five-Star rating. The Creekwood UMC staff fits the bill. Our staff is intelligent, dependable, sincere, hardworking, energetic, caring, supportive and compassionate. The Creekwood UMC staff is generous in spirit, diligent to serve God's people, adaptable to changing times, imaginative in their ministry, energetic in all they do, and loyal to their mission."*** - Tonya Vining

Ever since Moses acknowledged with his father-in-law's help that he couldn't lead alone in the book of Exodus, it has been a recurring practice among God's people to appoint leaders responsible for organizing ministry efforts. As they wandered in the wilderness and settled into the Promised Land, the Levites, tasked with caring for the Temple and its rituals, were sustained by the community's support.

In Acts 6, the apostles designated Stephen and others to specifically attend to the needs of widows and orphans. Consistently, the Bible emphasizes the provision of support for these appointed individuals in their life's work for spreading the Gospel.

The anticipated staff expenses, spanning from payroll taxes to ongoing education, are distributed across the budgeted categories mentioned earlier.



**Staff Christmas 2023**

**Here are just a few more ways that staff make a profound impact for Creekwood UMC UMC:**

- Maria, Creekwood UMC's custodian, ensures the cleanliness of the building all the way down to the toys that our preschoolers play with.
- Pastor Wendy diligently visits not only Creekwood UMC UMC members, but each person she hears needs a listening ear and a loving presence.
- Michael Crawford inspires the choir to blend their voices to make beautiful music, all while inspiring them to blend their lives in caring for each other.

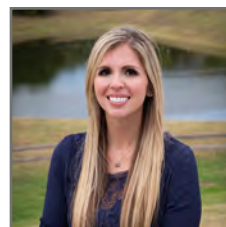
People are what make ministry happen, and in our pattern of life, it takes the hiring of gifted, dedicated, faithful servants to help us organize opportunities to experience and share the love of Christ.

We have some incredible volunteers that have helped us not only to survive but to thrive in the last 3 years. However, it is essential to

prioritize investing in both our existing and future staff members to retain and attract top talent, addressing the essential needs required to reach a broader audience with the goodness of God.

Our current spending on staff is \$613,627, which is a decrease of nearly \$150,000 from 2022's budget. Our hope is to get salary levels to livable levels that reward the immense dedication of the current staff and fund our desired staffing model. That level would bring us to spending the proposed \$698,543.81 in 2024.

This includes pastors, custodians, administrative personnel, musicians, childcare workers, payroll taxes, payroll processing fees, and everything in between. By surpassing the expected rise in giving, we could further expand our support by hiring additional office staff, welcoming summer youth interns, fund a full-time Student Minister and transitioning our Director of Kids Ministry to a full-time role.





# Testimonial



## Jack Stone on Stewardship

I remember growing up, that my Dad always arranged for our minister to get a silent gift of a new suit at Christmas time. That introduced me to Stewardship and its importance to be a giving member of my church.

This year I was blessed with my wife Karol to join Creekwood and strengthen our bond with the pastors, staff and our church family. Tithing and continuous monetary support enables our church to show our love to others through our mission outreach in so many ways. From Open House for special adults to outreach to seniors and our infirm members and to our outreach to other wonderful local and world at large needs.

Our pastoral team is something to behold and our giving releases them from significant stress to make ends meet including our very important mission work.

We all have the potential to provide our tithes....'plus some' for the glory of God and his son Jesus Christ our savior. Karol and I are more focused on the 'plus some'. We are so excited each week to see our young families at church and especially enjoy Children's time. Our entire family wishes each family in our church special blessings this holiday season. Remember 'plus some' in everything you do everyday of the year.

~ Jack Stone



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**Senior Pastor: David Lessner**  
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